

U.S. Department of Justice

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NEWS RELEASE

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that Alexander James Hardnett, age 29, of Lancaster County, Virginia, was sentenced today by United States District Judge James R. Spencer. Hardnett was sentenced to life in prison for participating in a conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine in the Northern Neck area of Virginia. A forfeiture order for \$750,000.00 was also entered against Hardnett for the proceeds of the cocaine sold by the conspiracy over a five-year period.

This drug conspiracy began in New York City in approximately 1988, when Hardnett and other conspirators were still in middle school. In 1998, members of the conspiracy began to move to the Northern Neck region, ultimately settling in Lancaster County, and bringing their drug business with them. Many of the co-conspirators moved to Virginia from New York, but others were recruited locally. From 1998 through May of 2003 the conspiracy was responsible for the distribution of approximately 15 kilograms of crack in the Northern Neck area of Virginia. Charged in the indictment with Hardnett were Kenneth Honor, Jerry Fontaine and Michael Woodson, also from New York City, and Cassandra Dameron and Delores Duncan of Lancaster County.

Hardnett used firearms and violence to threaten others and, on at least one occasion, sliced the hand of a co-conspirator who lost some of his money. During the span of the conspiracy Hardnett and Honor travelled to New York City twice a month and purchased \$10,000.00 worth of crack cocaine for resale in Virginia. On one of these trips to New York, Hardnett was robbed and stabbed while attempting to purchase cocaine. During the attack, New York police officers intervened, saving Hardnett's life and seizing approximately \$10,000.00, cash which was later introduced at Hardnett's November, 2003 trial.

Mr. McNulty stated: "These defendants were part of a violent drug operation that wrecked havoc in Lancaster County for several years. This case shows once again that those who tear down Virginia's communities, regardless if they are in cities or rural areas, will pay a high price for their crimes."

Also announcing the sentence today are James Gregorius, Drug Enforcement

Administration; Captain Cecil Dye, Virginia State Police, State Police Drug Enforcement Division; Ronald D. Crockett, Lancaster County Sheriff; C.W. Jackson, Westmoreland County Sheriff; and L. Wayne Middleton, Northumberland County Sheriff.

The case was investigated by agents of Drug Enforcement Administration and Virginia State Police and officers from the Lancaster County, Westmoreland County and Northumberland County Sheriff's Offices and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Sara E. Flannery.

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